

February 24, 2022

HB 5037 An Act Adjusting The State Budget For The Biennium ending June 30, 2023

My name is Jay Tulin and I live in Farmington, Connecticut. I am testifying in support of a raised bill in the Public Health Committee regarding Accessibility of Medical Diagnostic Equipment. It is critical that the Governor's Proposed Budget be amended to include funding the address the need for accessible diagnostic medical equipment. The lack of accessible diagnostic medical equipment has affected me personally. I was caregiver for my wife for over 10 years before she passed in 2015. The lack of equitable care such as not being weighed at doctor's appointments due to her wheelchair, significantly delayed care due to lack of equipment, inability to get screening or imaging tests, getting transferred manually out of your wheelchair onto an exam table, getting examined by your doctor in your wheelchair, feeling unsafe being transferred out of your wheelchai all had a tremendous impact on her ability to receive adequate care.] A doctor literally told her not to get on his exam table because she would break the table. In many offices, her oversized wheelchair was not able to get through doors.

Due to the lack of accessible equipment and proper training, research shows that people with disabilities experience salient health disparities, such as higher rates of preventable conditions like diabetes and heart disease and lower rates of cancer screenings. It thus follows that people with disabilities are diagnosed with cancer at more advanced stages and have higher cancer mortality compared to our non-disabled counterparts. These are clear differences in our health that are **avoidable and unjust**; therefore, they are health inequities that must be urgently addressed. Moreover, improving the accessibility of the healthcare infrastructure has the potential to benefit many groups of people, including those with disability, the elderly, and pregnant women, as well as increase the safety of medical staff.

The National Council on Disability released a comprehensive report in 2021 in which they demonstrate that the lack of enforceable medical diagnostic equipment standards allows for continued, widespread **discrimination** in healthcare for people with mobility disabilities. The U.S. Access Board issued accessibility standards for diagnostic medical equipment in 2017; however only the Veterans Health Administration has chosen to adopt them. More than 30 years after enactment of the Americans with Disabilities Act, healthcare remains inaccessible to people with disabilities. If we don't choose to change now, **when will we?** People with disabilities deserve equal opportunity and dignity in all aspects of their lives, but most importantly in their healthcare. Connecticut should **serve as a role model of health equity and innovation** by adopting the U.S. Access Board accessibility standards, and take the necessary steps towards improving healthcare access and quality for its disabled citizens.

Thanks for the opportunity.